

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 3314

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 9.)

FOR SECRETARY FROM HABIB

1. SUMMARY: THREE DAY VISIT TO CANBERRA MAY 21-24 PROVIDED EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW FULL RANGE OF REGIONAL ISSUES, AS WELL AS SEVERAL BILATERAL MATTERS, WITH TOP GOA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PM WHITLAM, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AND RANKING FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE OFFICIALS. OPPOSITION LEADERS AND OTHER MP'S ALSO SHARED WITH ME THEIR VIEWS ON FUTURE OF AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. BILATERAL RELATIONS. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT OUR CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA IS HEALTHY, AND IN THE BEST SHAPE SINCE LABOR ENTERED OFFICE IN 1972. THE DAYS OF SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE PASSED FOREVER, AND WE DO NOT SHARE PRECISELY THE SAME PERCEPTIONS OF ASIA. NEVER-THELESS, AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO REGARD THE US AS ITS MOST ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP AND PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM AND COMPANY HAVE MATURED IN OFFICE TO THE POINT THAT RAGGING THE US IS NOW RECOGNIZED AS NEITHER POLITICALLY PRODUCTIVE NOR IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL INTEREST. MOREOVER, U.S. FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA NOW HAVE THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF WHITLAM AND HIS GOVERNMENT. IN THE WAKE OF INDO-CHINA, US CONSTANCY IN THE REGION HAS GAINED EVEN GREATER IMPORTANCE, IN AUSTRALIAN EYES.

3. AS EXAMPLES OF THE GOA'S CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARD AND VALUE OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US, WHITLAM SUPPRESSED WHAT MIGHT HAVE
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BEEN AN EARLIER NATURAL TENDENCY TO CRITICIZE OUR HANDLING OF THE

MAYAGUEZ. DEFENSE MINISTER BARNARD PUBLICLY SUPORTED OUR APPROACH TO THE MAYAGUEZ, AND REITERATED TO ME THAT WE HAD QTE ACTED PROPERLY, END QTE. SECONDLY, DESPITE THE THREAT OF SOME OPPOSITION FROM LEFTISTS AND RADICAL STUDENTS, THE GOA CONFIRMED TO ME ITS APPROVAL FOR A VISIT TO PERTH BY THE USS CORAL SEA NEXT WEEK (CORAL SEA'S PARTICIPATION IN MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR HAS MADE VISIT POTENTIALLY SOMETHING OF A HOT POTATO IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA). THIRDLY, DURING MY VISIT GOA INFORMED US OF INTENTION TO PURCHASE FROM US P-3 ORION LONG-RANGE PATROL AIRCRAFT. FINALLY, GOA APPEARS RELAXED AT THIS POINT ON OUR DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA. WHILE THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT RETAINS BASIC RESERVATIONS ON THE SUBJECT, ITS UNDERSTANDING OF OUR INTENDED CONSTRUCTION, TO BE FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION OF INDIAN OCEAN TOPIC, WITH THE SOVIETS, IS A SATISFACTORY SCENARIO FROM OUR VANTAGE. ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT WAS TOUCHED ON IN SEVERAL OF MY CONVERSATIONS HERE, THE AUSTRALIANS CLEARLY DID NOT SEEK TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF DIEGO GARCIA, AND THEY AVOIDED CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE MATTER.

4. REGIONAL ISSUES. ON DEVELOPMENTS IN SEA, I CONCLUDE THAT ESSENTIAL US AND AUSTRALIAN INTERESTS ARE PERCEIVED IN A GENERALLY PARALLEL MANNER, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOT A COMPLETE CONVERGENCE OF PERCEPTIONS. IN GENERAL, THE GOA FINDS POTENTIALLY GREATER PROFIT IN EFFORTS TO ACCOMMODATE HANOI, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF INJECTING A DEGREE OF MODERATION IN HANOI'S POLICIES TOWARD THE REST OF SEA. SIMILARLY, THE GOA TENDS TO PERCEIVE HANOI'S INTENTIONS, BEYOND THE CONFINES OF INDO-CHINA, AS RELATIVELY BENIGN - UNTIL PROVEN OTHERWISE. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WITH WHOM I TALKED MAINTAINED THAT THEY WILL ENGAGE IN POLICIES DESIGNED TO INFLUENCE HANOI TOWARD MODERATION QTE WITH EYES WIDE OPEN. END QTE.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA ARE OF AS GREAT CONCERN TO THE AUSTRALIANS AS THEY ARE TO US. IN THE CASE OF INDONESIA, A COUNTRY OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO AUSTRALIA, WHITLAM HAS REMAINED STEADFAST IN THE FACE OF INTERNAL POLITICAL OPPOSITION, ARGUING THAT AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTERESTS REQUIRE THE GOA TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SUHARTO REGIME, DESPITE THE ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL REPRESSION IN INDONESIA. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOA IS DEMONSTRABLY UNEASY ABOUT THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN INDONESIA.

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6. WHILE DEFENSE MINISTER BARNARD STATED FLATLY HIS HOPE THAT THE US WILL MAINTAIN A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF OPINION IN THE GOA THAT THE US MUST TURN AWAY FROM AN EMPHASIS ON MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS IN SEA. A PARTICULAR DILEMMA FOR THE GOA IS THE ROLE OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO INDONESIA. WHILE IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT INDONESIA REQUIRES ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOP ITS STRATEGIC MOBILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS, THERE IS A GENUINE FEAR AS TO THE EVENTUAL

DIRECTION OF INDONESIAN POLICY AND POLITICAL SECURITY THREAT TO AUSTRALIA. THUS, THE GOA WOULD NOT LOOK WITH FAVOR UPON INDONESIA'S ACQUISITION OF SOPHISTICATED MILITARY HARDWARE.

7. THE GOA DOES NOT REGARD THE FIVE-POWER DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT AS A SIGNIFICANT MECHANISM TO INSURE STABILITY IN SEA, BUT NEVERTHELESS INTENDS TO RETAIN THE TWO SQUADRONS OF MIRAGE AIRCRAFT IN MLASIA QTE AS LONG AS MALAYSIA WANTS THEM. END QTE. THE INDONESIANS APPARENTLY APPROVE OF THIS AUSTRALIAN PRESENCE IN MALAYSIA.

8. WITH RESPECT TO US POLICY TOWARD INDOCHINA, AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS INDICATE THEY HOPE THE US WILL NOT WAIT TOO LONG TO MOVE TOWARD SOME SORT OF RELATIONSHIP WITH HANOI, SAIGON AND POSSIBLY PHNOM PENH. THEIR FEELING IS THAT THE US CAN PLAY SOMETHING OF A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE AREA, AND THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE DID NOT QTE ABDICATE END QTE FROM THE REGION. THE GOA, RECOGNIZING THE DEEP CONCERN - EVEN FEAR - AMONG THE ASEAN NATIONS FOLLOWING THE RECENT INDOCHINA DEBACLE, IS ANXIOUS THAT ASEAN NOT MOVE TOWARD A COLLECTIVE SECURITY GROUPING WHICH COULD PLACE IT IN A CONFRONTATION POSTURE WITH INDOCHINA. TO AVOID MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION, GOA OFFICIALS DID NOT SUGGEST TO ME THAT THE US SHOULD UNDERTAKE ANY DIRECT SECURITY GUARANTEES OF THE ASEAN AREA, BUT THEY NEVERTHELESS WELCOMED MY EXPRESSIONS OF THE US INTENTION TO DEMONSTRATE CONSTANCY IN THE REGION.

9. THE GOA IS UNDERTAKING A COMPLETE REVIEW OF ITS OWN WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA AND GOA POLICY, AND HOPES TO HAVE ITS OPTIONS REFINED IN AUGUST. WHILE MY VISIT WAS PRIMARILY AIMED AT GAINING GOA VIEWS, THE INDICATIONS OF CURRENT US THINKING WHICH I WAS ABLE TO RENDER UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE OF CONSIDERABLE VALUE TO THEM. IN SHORT, CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS BRIEF VISIT HAS BEEN OF CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGE TO BOTH SIDES.
GREEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Draft Date: 24 MAY 1975
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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